

DRAFT PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2005

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jeremy Daly, Chair
Paula Caron
Jay Cruz
John DiPasquale
Mike Hurley
Nancy Maynard
Dean Tran
Yvette Cooks (associate member)
Paul Fontaine, Jr. (associate member)

PLANNING OFFICE: David Streb, Mike O'Hara

Call to Order

Mr. Daly called meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Veteran's Room, First Floor, City Hall.

Communications

Received correspondence from Atty. Watts requesting to release the remaining bond for Apple Country Estates. Will obtain recommendation from Engineering for future meeting.

Received communication from the ZBA regarding approval at 780 Water Street referencing Site Plan Review. Paula Caron mentioned that beautification of the site as a big concern and a condition of the ZBA's decision.

Received the NWRA annual report.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the November 15th and December 6th meetings were approved unanimously.

ANR Plans

Rindge Road, Legros

One lot to be split from 40+ acre lot. Under recent amendment to Watershed Protection District, one lot allowed to be split off under the former lot size and frontage requirements (175 feet & 65,000 s.f.)

Marshall & Fisher Road.

Five lots split from 15 acre parcel fronting on Fisher & Marshall Road.

Mt. Vernon Ave., Caveney

Two new building lots plus lot around existing house at #340 Mt Vernon. Parcels A & B to be conveyed to abutter

Rindge Rd., Mechanic St., Cumberland Farms

One lot to be split from lot with garage. Cumberland Farms will be submitting plans for new store on Lot 13-1. Remaining Lot will be site of a replacement garage

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Special Permit modification - Mass. Innovation Center, 1 Oak Hill Road, 86 units elderly housing

Public Hearing was opened at 6:15 p.m.

Bob Ansin, Peter Linn (Project Architect), Peter Dion (Mass Innovation) present.

Mr. Ansin presented proposal for 86 units of senior, affordable rental housing in Building 4 portion of complex - four floors. Originally hoped to put market rate condos in, but it was determined it wasn't feasible. They are looking at \$160 per s.f. construction costs.

The project will consist of four floors consisting of 61 one-bedroom and 25 two-bedroom units. Rents will be \$700 - \$1,000/mo. Public space on the first floor will be available for services. Low Income Tax Credits & Historic Tax Credits designed for the working poor.

Mr. Linn said that there were no significant differences between EMG site plan from 2002 and the current plan, except the boiler room will stay.

Mr. Ansin indicated that their market studies had shown the need for senior housing. He feels that senior housing is less onerous on city services.

Number of parking spaces will decrease from previous plan. Parking demand is less because there's no retail space now. Entrance to site will be the same as Charter School except that they anticipate access from the east as well. Whitman & Bingham will be the engineers for this project.

Each rental unit will have its own electric meter, and use the geothermal system to heat it.

The flood walls present a challenge for a riverwalk through the site. Could be either hung from the floodwall suspended over the Nashua R., or run it adjacent to the wall. They want to do whatever they can to improve the quality of life for residents of area. If they are able to participate in the completion of the riverwalk, they will.

Public comment:

Marc Dohan, Director of the Twin Cities CDC: Fitchburg has a lot of these mill buildings and this project demonstrates a good re-use. Says that this is creative and innovative. This also provides high quality rental units which are scarce in Fitchburg.

Marianne Graham, CDC spoke in support of this project citing that affordable rental housing is important. Councillor Norman Boisvert stated that this project is necessary as Cleghorn is coming back. It's a superb project and he supports it 100%.

Mike O'Hara asked about access to senior housing. Peter Linn advised that main access would be at easterly end near boiler room. There would be exits at both ends, no entrance directly from courtyard. There would be a 2,500 sq.ft. multi-purpose room with shelves and tables and chairs. They do anticipate that the management company will have a services director. They're also considering a walking trail along the site.

The public hearing closed at 7:08 p.m.

Motion made & seconded to approve the requested modification of the Special Permit subject to conditions: Review of parking demand after two years.

Vote 7-0 in favor.

Site Plan Review - Central Plaza renovations, Water St.

Hearing opened. Brent Ballantyne & Jim D'Angelo of TEC Inc., engineers for project, presented plans.

They're going to demolish a portion of rear of building so delivery trucks can go completely around the site. Also demolishing D'Angelo's and the car dealership. Total of 120,000 s.f. of space is being removed. Light poles will be removed and placed per lighting plan. Building will get new facades.

Access improvements include a wider driveway, and a new driveway near the present D'Angelo's. One of the sycamore trees will be removed and trucks will be routed around the rear. Proposed improvements to Water Street include a slight widening and adding a designated turn lane. Mr. DiPasquale asked about access to Pelletier's.

Area to the south near Nashua R. floodwall (present car dealership) is proposed for parking only, but they can't rule out another building pad in future.

Public comment:

Paul Bouvier of Midtown Beef asked regarding plans for access from Water Street. His business handles 30-35 semis per day.

Mr. Ballantyne: No raised islands in Rt. 12, just scored concrete, trucks will be able to drive over. Designated left turn lane was cut back to allow Left into and out of Pelletier's.

Dan Curley, IDC - is enthused with this project. The City is looking forward to it.
Liz Stathis said it was a long time in coming.

David Streb asked if the Board had considered where a portion of rail trail thru property could go. May need some property from railroad.

Ms. Maynard asked if graffiti on floodwall could be cleaned up.

Mr. Ballantyne: present Market Basket location will still be retail space. Don't know tenant yet. Package store lease will be renewed. Market Basket plans to be open by Thanksgiving 2006

Board members asked that rear of building be well-lit for security reasons.

Ms. Maynard - railing on Water Street bridge over Nashua needs painting.

Public hearing closed.

Motion made & seconded to grant Site Plan Approval subject to:

- Obtaining DPW approval for Route 12 improvements
- Security lighting on building
- Graffiti removal on Nashua River flood wall abutting site
- Any major modification of entrances subject to Planning Board review & approval

Vote unanimous to approve.

Definitive Subdivision "Parker Hill Acres" - Matson, Westminster Hill Road

(continued from 12-6-05)

Members present for hearing: Caron, Cruz, Daly, Hurley, Maynard, Tran (6).

Atty. Watts representing applicant asked that the Board should vote on the submittal at this meeting and they'd make any necessary modifications to plan later.

Discussion about Weston & Sampson's report on water system impact. Water Dept. wants improvements of water line in Sanborn St. from Westminster St. to Simonds St. (about 350 feet) in lieu of replacing a water line on Temple Street as stated in Weston & Sampson's the report. Water Dept. will do the Temple Street work. During peak demand, water pressure will be insufficient for five lots in the subdivision. These lots will have to remain unbuilt, or have private wells installed, or require booster pumps.

Matson has agreed to install sewer on Hemlock Drive to provide sewer to 14 existing houses. Individual homeowners will arrange for hook-ups. City will pay for re-paving with Chapter 90 monies.

If the Board votes for the alternate access off Colony Road rather than Hartland Avenue, they'll need a waiver from Board from several items in subdivision regulations, including the 49.8 foot width requirement. Applicant not willing to place granite curbing throughout the subdivision. They want a waiver for sidewalk on one side, but not if they have to put in granite curbing along entire road. Ms. Caron suggested granite curbing only at the intersections.

MS Transportation faxed data requested by Vollmer that afternoon and Volmer hadn't had a chance to review it. Also, Board received Whitman & Bingham's 12/16 response to comments from Vollmer, but Vollmer hasn't had a chance to respond.

Mr. Cruz asked if Matson would consider paying \$10,000 for a study on traffic improvements on Westminster Hill Road. Wes Flis said that Whitman & Bingham had prepared plans for an earlier project that show improvements to Westminster Hill Road. Also, Mr. Mattson was willing to install sidewalks as a condition of a previous subdivision approval, but the residents didn't want sidewalk at that time.

David Streb spoke to the rationale of make road improvements and allocating the cost.
Atty. Watts said his client is being asked to do sewer extension on Hemlock Drive and make I & I contribution which constitutes a sewer improvement.

Mr. Daly asked whether there were any new concerns about the project.

Public Comment:

Nancy Degrosilliers, 1087 Westminster Hill Rd, the new road would be abutting her property and she wanted to know what he's going to do.

Mr. Matson said that if she is in agreement, he will grade her property. If not, he'll build a wall. She liked the idea. Another person wanted to know if the sewer on Hemlock was going to be done.

Mr. Daly doesn't think the value of the I & I contribution (18,500 gallons x \$4/gallon) is as great as the sewer extension.

Mr. Daly wanted to know how the Board felt about off-site improvements and waivers.

Ms. Caron didn't feel a planning study for improvements to Westminster Hill Road was necessary.

Mr. Cruz: until the water tank gets built, there won't be much development up there.

Mr. Daly: what about sidewalks.

Ms. Caron: wants granite curb at all intersection roundings, sewer on Hemlock, water on Sanborn Street, realign fence on Brierwood, grading on DeGrosillier lot.

Councilor Kaddy: Can construction vehicles enter site from the west & go over "top" of Westminster Hill Road instead of traveling from east on Westminster Hill Road.

Atty. Watts asked if they could reduce it I & I charge to \$1/gallon. Matson estimates cost of Hemlock Drive project between \$60-70,000. Question: When would the sewer be installed? Spring of 06 is his intent.

The hearing was closed at 8:55 p.m.

Motion made & seconded to approve Definitive Subdivision Plan for 42 lots subject to conditions:

- Five lots would be approved, but not buildable.
- Submittal of project phasing plan.
- Access via Colony Rd., not Hartland Ave.
- I & I charge
- Extend sewer to 14 dwellings on Hemlock Dr.

Vote unanimous 6-0 to approve.

Special Permit - "Wanoosnoc Estates", Damon Rd., Pandiscio (continued from 11-15-05)

Hearing was opened at 9:00 p.m.

Members present for hearing: Caron, Cruz, DiPasquale, Hurley, Maynard, Tran, Fontaine (assoc. member), Cooks (associate member)

Mr. Daly could not vote. Everyone else was eligible to vote and Mr. Daly turned the meeting over to Ms. Caron.

Mr. Pandiscio – They have been here from 2002. They probably hold the record for time length. They've answered all your questions 2 or 3 times. They got a list of recommendations, did them, then they got another list. They feel they've submitted everything possible. Folks, vote on it, yes or no.

Ms. Caron stated it's a new plan.

Mr. Cruz made a motion to close the hearing. No one seconded.

Ms. Cooks: asked if new information was submitted.

Mr. DiPasquale asked what information they were lacking.

Mr. Hurley responded a water impact study and review of traffic study.

Mr. DiPasquale: indicated that the plan was denied, and for good reason.

Proponents discussed turnouts. Ms. Caron stated that widening the entire road would be better.

Mr. Pandiscio asked what the Board wanted. Specifics on width of Damon Road.

Project will cost \$30 million when built out and \$5 million in infrastructure. He says that the plan hasn't really changed.

Mr. Tran: indicated that the bottom line is and you just need to give the missing information.

Mr. Pandiscio made reference to a meeting with Mr. Daly & the Mayor with the revised plan, expecting a cake walk. Mr. Pandiscio said he adjusted the plan based on Fire Department concerns.

Mr. Pandiscio was told that we need money before we request a peer review of the traffic and water studies.

Ms. Caron doesn't think we'll have the information by January. Mike will put together a list of missing information. Mr. Tran requests that we don't make any changes.

Public comment:

John Beauchene, 30 Olin Ave. – The water pipes are really old and the water study should take this condition into account. Where will the sewer line go? Answer: down Wanoosnoc Road.

Atty. Bowen, representing M/M Thomas – A significant gap exists in the traffic report on Mr. Elam Road. That should be addressed in the review. Also, a Development Impact Statement should be submitted, particularly in light of the earth removal.

Roger Rose, 126 Damon Rd – There should be sidewalks on Damon Road. Also, water drains across Damon Road & freezes. Also, plans are supposed to show a lateral view. Also, he's concerned about the blasting. Applicant is not bringing any utilities down Damon Rd.

John Carbone, 33 Damon Rd. – He admits he's angry. He's proposing to take his front yard (road layout). Mr. Pandiscio stated that that is why they want to do turnouts.

Atty. Bowen – The city needs to take the needs of the abutters into consideration. The applicant is asking for special consideration - a Special Permit.

Terry Thomas, 126 Damon Rd. – There are old oaks that will have to come down. Also, a perennial stream runs under the road when it floods and you can't do anything without affecting the brook. Also, the sight distance is really bad at the intersection of Mr. Elam Road. Also, we can't get hydrants down that road.

Jerry Testagrossa – Have to meet the water requirements to sprinkle the building. He says according to Fire Dept. they cannot meet the 1,000 gallon/hour requirements.

Mt. Elam designated a Scenic Road — How will a Damon Road improvements and more traffic impact that?

Steve Holt, 152 Olin Avenue – Mr. Pandiscio alluded to the fact that he pays experts and neighbors don't. But he says that they have hired experts to review plans.

Will there be land donated to the city or to a land trust? He doesn't see a reference to that on the latest plan.

Michael Donnelly, 883 Mt. Elam Rd. – The developer has a right to develop this property, but the Planning Board has leeway because he is asking for a Special Permit. Looking for something special. He made reference to a Chamber of Commerce brochure that referenced the trees in the area. He also asked if the Board has seen a conventional subdivision & suggested that may be a better alternative for this site. How can we determine how many units to approve.

Ms. Caron – There's no requirement that a conventional be compared to a Special Permit, but only to a flexible development.

Site is 27.5 acres, it includes the cell tower and 12 acres. The sewer and water have to go through the 12 acres.

Atty. John Bowen – why is this a PUD? It's not mixed use. Mr. Fontaine advised that is because of the open space.

Larry Zarella, 140 Olin Ave. asked several questions about sewer pump station, proximity to wireless towers, that they're unsafe.

Hearing continued to February 21, 2006

Pappas – Release of eight (8) lots and acceptance of a bond.

Atty. Watts had requested a release of a ninth lot at the "Mt. Elam Peak" subdivision and submitted a performance bond for \$195,257. Board voted to release nine lots (Lots 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14 & 16) from the subdivision covenant.

Meeting adjourned 10:15 p.m.

Next meeting: January 17, 2006 (CDBG), January 24, 2006 (regular business)

Approved: _____